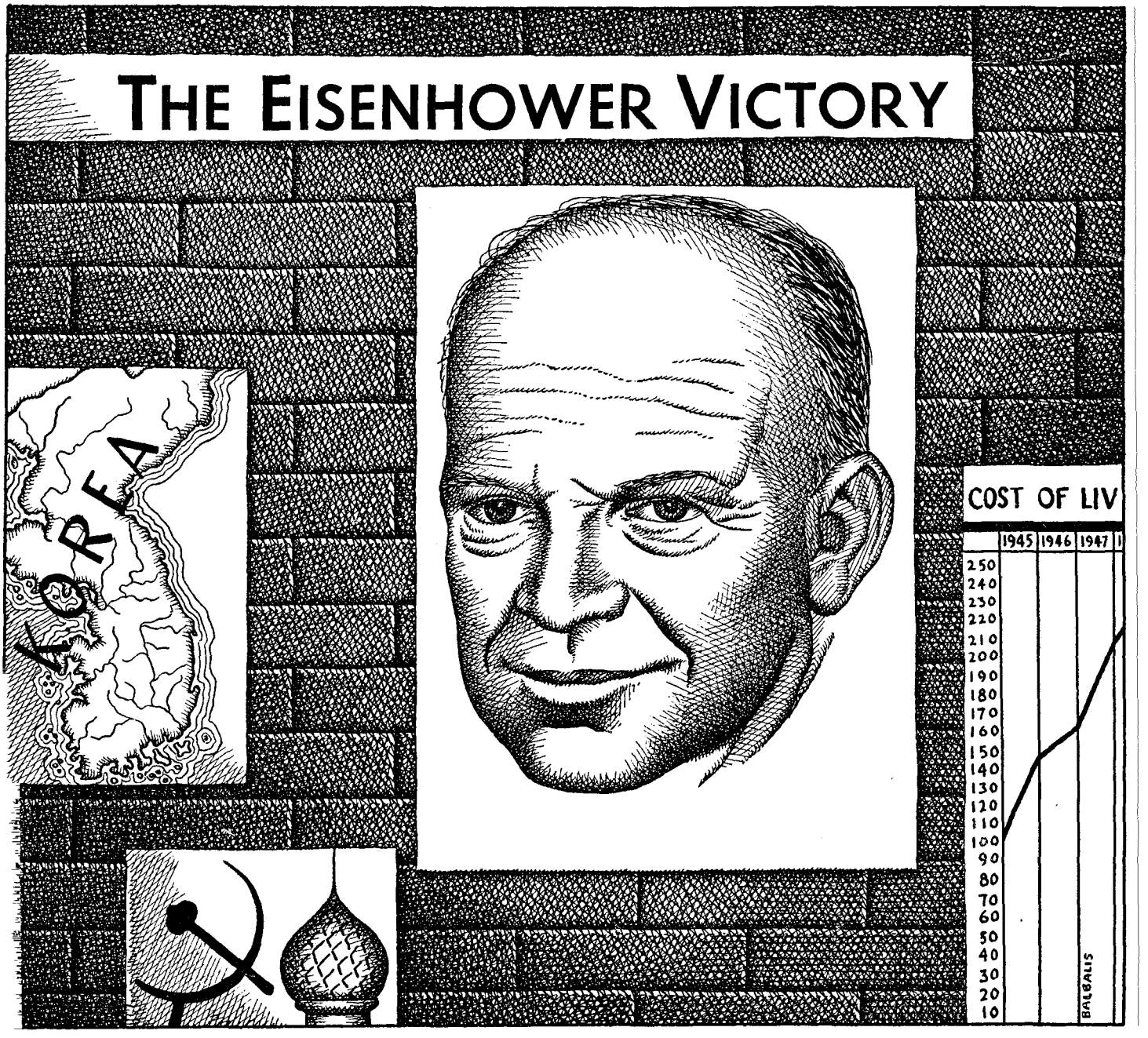
RELIGION AND STATE IN ISRAEL

Will Herber

THE

Commonweal



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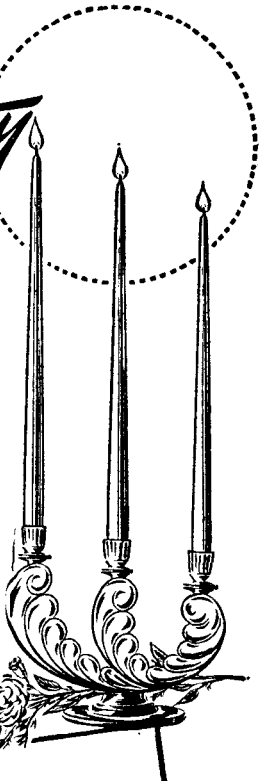

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THIS WEEK

The Eisenhower Victory 131

Week by Week 133

Religion and State in Israel
by Will Herberg 135

The Charms of Anarchism
by John C. Cort 139

The Stage
by Richard Hayes 140

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 141

Communications 142

Aiken's Search for Self-Awareness
by S. M. Fitzgerald 143

Book Reviews 147

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THE
Commonweal

The Eisenhower Victory

AFTER a hard-fought campaign, when the votes have been registered and the majority's choice made clear, it is traditional in American politics for the defeated to congratulate the victors, to wish them well, and to promise honest cooperation in all efforts toward securing the national welfare. The cynical may dismiss this as a largely meaningless gesture, an attempt to disguise private bitterness behind the mask of public magnanimity, and so it may be, in some cases. But essentially, we believe, it is a tradition rooted in something which is basic to the survival of a free society: the widespread realization that questions of partisan advantage must finally be forgotten in the pursuit of the common good, a pursuit which is the exclusive concern of no one man, faction, or party.

And so The Commonweal, which endorsed the candidacy of Governor Stevenson and urged his election as "a matter of vital importance to the nation," now congratulates General Eisenhower and joins all men of good-will in the hope that during his tenure as President he may fulfil the high promise which the majority of Americans have seen in him.

This tradition of post-election cooperation should not, of course, imply any abandonment of conviction, any subscription to a romantic theory that the majority always acts wisely and chooses well. History would contradict such optimism. We must admit, for example, that the election of General Eisenhower does not alter the convictions which we expressed in our pre-election editorials. For though good-natured analogies between politics and sports are sometimes made, the two are not really related: in politics, the "best man" does *not* always win.

Although we reject the theory that the majority choice is *ipso facto* the wiser choice, we also believe that, contrary to the minority's expectations, history frequently proves it so. The minority should be willing to accept such a verdict, should, indeed, hope that it will eventually be rendered. For the sake of a common good transcending any partisan good, it must hope that it was wrong. And so, for the sake of the country and of the world, all those who supported Governor Stevenson must now be willing to cooperate with General Eisenhower to make this hope come true. In this way a responsible opposition can develop in American politics.

With all the advantage of hindsight judgment, it is not difficult to see that from the very beginning the General's efforts were almost predestined to success and the Governor's to defeat. One distinguished commentator has observed that, in his opinion, nothing either candidate could have said during the campaign would have been likely to alter the final result. Both the General's "crusade" and the Governor's attempt "to educate and elevate a people whose destiny is leadership" were played out in a context which offered small chance that specific argument could influence the ultimate decision.

For the context, it now seems, was not rational. It was, depending on one's point of view, either super- or sub-rational. It was compounded of emotion, hope, and fear. It was the drive toward a mystique. People knew that things were not as they should be, so they wanted a change. They did not know the way, so they wanted a leader. They were weary of conflict, so they wanted repose. The definition of stands, the discussion of issues, these were things with which they were supremely impatient.

WITHIN this context the General was nominated and campaigned. His name had been a household symbol of security and strength for almost ten years. Now he named villains and promised both retribution and relief.

Adlai Stevenson, on the other hand, was a man of whom the great majority of Americans had never heard prior to his nomination, a politician whose name could not be remembered by many Americans up to the day of the election. And he went about the country telling those who came to hear him that there are no easy answers, that the people must be prepared to endure years of frustration and anguish if they are to hope for an ultimate triumph.

The majority ("of course," we can now say) chose the General. And their choice was probably

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not so much a vote for Dwight Eisenhower and a protest against Adlai Stevenson as it was a vote for a change from a world which seemed incapable of being worse than it is and a rejection of the party which had presided over the evolution of that world. It was, in some instances, a vote against the twentieth century.

General Eisenhower, having been elected in such a context, will now be expected by many of those who voted for him to "set things right." Their disappointment will be keen when they hastily discover that there is no passport from the present, that the world over which the new Republican administration will preside will be the same perilous one for which they blamed the Democrats. The new President will, sooner or later, be forced to tell the nation in his own words what his late opponent said so eloquently at the time of his nomination: " . . . that there are no gains without pains, that this is the eve of great decisions, not easy ones, like resistance when you're attacked, but a long, patient, costly struggle which alone can assure triumph over the great enemies of men—war and poverty and tyranny—and the assaults upon human dignity which are the most grievous consequences of each."

THE gravest difficulty which General Eisenhower will face when he takes office in January will be the task of formulating a policy designed to meet the world situation described by Governor Stevenson, and his difficulty here will be, unfortunately, partly of his own making.

It will be a double difficulty, for it will involve many voters in the majority which elected him and also many who were elected to Congress in his sweep. In the first instance, the promise of easy victories which the General seemed to offer will not be forthcoming, and so many who voted for him will be disillusioned. In the second, the return to the Senate of its most disreputable elements—McCarthy, Jenner, Watkins, and Bricker—together with the defeat of some of its most distinguished and promising members—men like Senators Benton and Moody—will make the President's task far from easy.

To execute a vigorous and enlightened policy he will have to do a speedy and herculean job of educating many of his own party, but even this will not be enough. He will also have to depend strongly upon the support of Democrats both in the House and Senate if decently forward-looking programs, either foreign or domestic, are to have any chance of success.

The hope, of course, is that the General elected will manifest that grasp of the complexity of problems and the need for leadership within his own party of which the General campaigning seemed so disturbingly innocent. And so, the whole nation must now pray that the leader so effectively obscured during the past few months (for the sake of party "harmony") will speedily come forth. If he does, as we were assured he will, then a great period in American politics may indeed lie before us, and the verdict of history may well be that Eisenhower's victory was that fortunate triumph which the minority now fails to see.

For a reborn Republican party (one which through the acceptance of responsibilty and the exercise of power will learn again the art of government and the price of progress and peace in the terrible realities of our century) will mark a genuine renascence in our political life. With such a party governing, the nation could feel secure, and the opposition party, the Democrats, could then have that opportunity for reorganization and revitalization which they can find as a responsible opposition. Under the leadership of Adlai Stevenson they could prove what the role of a minority party should be during an age of crisis, and so prepare themselves for ultimate resumption of leadership.

And both parties could now ponder with profit the words of the Governor of Illinois: "When the tumult and the shouting die, when the bands are gone and the lights are dimmed, there is the stark reality of responsibilty in an hour of history haunted with those grim, gaunt specters of strife, dissension, and materialism at home, and ruthless, inscrutable, and hostile power abroad." It is to the vision of this specter, and the sharing of responsibility in meeting it, that both parties are now called.

NEXT WEEK

MICHAEL P. FOGARTY writes about Britain and the attempt at European federation.

"The British have always felt that European unity is somehow a little parochial; rather like a man used to ranging over the world, who finds himself reduced by illness and old age to chatting with the neighbors. It is not surprising that the reaction of many British commentators to the doings at Strasbourg has been that Britain, Scandinavia and the free countries of Southeastern Europe should waste no more time on what is variously described as the 'rhetoric' or 'ramblings' of the Council of Europe—at best a 'useful scaffolding'—and should concentrate instead on strengthening their more effective Atlantic links."

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MR. STEVENSON

"LET'S talk sense to the American people," Mr. Stevenson said at the beginning of his campaign. And he did. Rarely in political life has the nation known a man who so consistently refused to play the game according to the time-tested rules of tawdry politics—or the new rules of Madison Avenue huckstering. Whatever the occasion, whatever the audience, the location or the provocations (and they were frequent and bitter), Mr. Stevenson spoke honestly, humbly, wisely and well. He made a gallant effort to keep his resolution to use the campaign as "a great opportunity to educate and elevate a people whose destiny is leadership, not alone of a rich, prosperous, contented country as in the past, but of a world in ferment."

Mr. Stevenson failed, but his failure was that of a man of shining honor and rare political integrity. "Better to lose the election than mislead the people," he said, and it is the sure knowledge that he kept his word and came through a great moral trial unscathed that sustains the spirit of his admirers in this hour of his—and their—**great defeat.**

A man of Stevenson's moral courage and intellectual integrity appears too seldom in the lifetime of a generation; that he should suffer abject defeat, while a man like Senator McCarthy rides on the wave of victory, is a bitter pill to swallow for those who found in the Governor's approach to political problems an unparalleled hope for the future and for the general elevation of our political debates. That a man of Mr. Stevenson's character should be dragged through the McCarthy mud as he was on election eve heightens the tragic overtones of his defeat.

Ordinarily one would accept as mere form the congratulatory message which the defeated traditionally offers the President-elect during the early hours of victory. But in the case of the candidate who never failed to mean what he said or to say what he meant, the message to General Eisenhower takes on new meaning. "The people have made their choice," the Governor wrote, "and I congratulate you. That you may be the servant and guardian of peace and make the day of trouble a dawn of hope is my earnest prayer." By accepting defeat in this same spirit of generosity and hope, the fervent admirers of Adlai Stevenson can honor him and the large cause he served with such unfailing integrity and distinction.

Like so many of those who supported Governor Stevenson, we of The Commonweal feel—perhaps more clearly in the gloom of defeat than we would in the exultation of victory—that more than our honoring him, he honored us, as indeed throughout his difficult period he honored all the finest things for which this nation stands. There is a crushing Stevenson defeat to mourn, but in the heart of everyone who followed the course of his campaign there is a great Stevenson victory to celebrate, too. It is the victory of those who have fought the good fight and can lay down the sword with honor unblemished.

AN INESCAPABLE RESPONSIBILITY

SINCE the Korean issue played so hectic a role in the Presidential campaign, the results may foreshadow certain fateful new decisions on our government's part. Even between now and the first of the year the present administration will be confronted by the upshot of current UN deliberations on the subject. For, now that the election is out of the way, discussions in committee on such crucial questions as the exchange of war prisoners should soon come to some sort of a vote in the United Nations Assembly.

A number of nations are now urging compromise solutions of the war-prisoner impasse—the big issue blocking further armistice negotiations. Prominent in this endeavor is the Arab-Asia bloc, which tends to view itself as mediator between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union. Canada, Mexico and Peru have also come to the forefront on this key issue. Within the UN, agitation for ending hostilities is quite general.

There is some chance that the UN members bent on terminating the Korean war may come forward with a common plan; they are already in agreement on several important details. Happily there is unity among them on one basic principle: no prisoner of the UN forces in Korea shall, on his release, be compelled to return home at the point of a bayonet.

In view of these concerted efforts and the big concessions already made by UN truce negotiators, it is clear that the determining factor is whether Soviet Russia wants the war ended at this time or not. If not, such further inducements as recognition in principle of repatriation and an ironclad guarantee that no released prisoners would be permitted to join Chiang Kai-shek will not avail. (The plan

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will also probably provide that disposal of released prisoners take place under impartial auspices on neutral ground and that those refusing to go home would be given at least temporary haven and gainful employment in neutral lands.)

If, despite all these safeguards from their point of view, the Soviets continue to insist on straight repatriation, the United Nations must hold firm—even at the cost of prolonging the tragic struggle. The history of the recent past plainly shows the grim fate that would await men repatriated to Communist territory against their will, particularly since the names of the seventy thousand UN captives unwilling to return have been disclosed to the Soviet authorities.

So that whatever new elements are to be injected into our policy in Korea as a result of the Eisenhower victory, the prisoner issue is one on which the United States has no choice but to hold its ground—in the name of justice and humanity.

THE ONCE-SOLID SOUTH

WRITING shortly after the election, the editors of a magazine which endorsed Adlai Stevenson do not find it easy to detect bright spots in the returns. In view of our enthusiastic support of the Democratic candidate, we were naturally disappointed at the verdict rendered at the polls. Indeed, if that were not the case there would have been no reason for us to back Governor Stevenson in the first place.

However, there is one aspect of the election returns on which the most determined Ike-liker and the most convinced Stevenson-supporter should be able to agree, once the initial impact of the results has worn off slightly. That potentially bipartisan bright spot can be found in the returns from the South.

Since the Civil War, it has been traditional to talk about "the solid South." The Democrats always took the South pretty much for granted, and the Republicans paid only lip service to the goal of winning popular support there. Throughout the South the GOP organization was largely moribund, showing signs of life only when the time came for delegates to be sent to the party's nominating convention. On Election Day, regardless of the candidates or the issues, all eleven states of the old Confederacy were expected to deliver their one-hundred-and-twenty-eight electoral votes solidly for the Democrats.

This pattern, which is part of the unfortunate heritage of the Civil War, has now been seriously threatened. The South delivered the bulk of its electoral votes for Stevenson. But for the first time since Al Smith's Catholicism turned the South to Hoover, the Republicans, under the leadership of General Eisenhower, did manage to put a substantial dent in what had come to be regarded as a Democratic monopoly in the South.

Whatever one's feelings about the outcome of the election itself, it is clear that this is a political development of major importance. And it is possible to say this, in spite of the fact that much of Eisenhower's influential support in the South came from oilmen with a stake in the tidelands and from those who were Dixiecrats in 1948.

Whatever the reasons for the GOP upsurge in the South this time, the long-range effects of such a change in political alignment should be good. Future competition for Southern votes will necessarily mean increased attention to that region's specific and very real problems. And very particularly, despite present Dixiecrat activity, all concerned will find it increasingly difficult to ignore the needs of Negroes, whose votes are likely to be of vital importance to both parties. The two-party system is late in coming to the South, but it represents a welcome improvement.

UNINFORMATIVE STRAW VOTES

THE pitfalls awaiting poll-takers were again illustrated by this election. Although in theory scientific samplings should be possible, the taking of straw votes is a calling with pronounced ups and downs. For years the *Literary Digest* made a career of it, only to come a cropper in 1932 (and soon afterward pass on it to its reward). Exercising greater care in building up genuine cross-sections of the electorate, the poll-takers then did relatively well until 1948—when their few percentage-points of error constituted the difference between a correct appraisal and naming, as they did, the wrong man.

The very hesitancy which resulted from this disquieting experience apparently kept Dr. Gallup and the others from a convincing forecast this time, too; several percentage-points error on the popular vote made it impossible for them to foresee (or proclaim) the electoral vote landslide for General Eisenhower. They did not even develop enough self-confidence to name the winning candidate with any show of assurance. As a result, the poll-takers have had another poor year. The threat that scientific vote forecasts in this country would be so accurate that the actual balloting on Election Day would constitute little more than a formality has yet to materialize.

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Religion and State in Israel

ORTHODOXY AND DYNAMIC SECULARISM CONFRONT EACH OTHER IN A LAND OF PARADOX.

WILL HERBERG

THE American visitor to Israel, however sympathetic he may be, is bound to carry away a rather confused and painful impression of the condition of religion in that country and its relation to the state. On the one hand, he will find indifference, even hostility, to religion more widespread and outspoken in the Holy Land than in almost any other country this side of the Iron Curtain; on the other hand, he will find religious freedom limited in a way that would be incredible at home. Religion plays virtually no role in the lives of a great part of the socially active elements in the new state; indeed, in their thinking, it is a mere remnant of ghetto "medievalism," destined to wither away in this modern age of science and enlightenment. Yet this state, so secular-minded in its background and leadership, ranks among those in the Western world where religion is still a matter of governmental administration and coercion.

These paradoxes are in part the result of the special historical circumstances under which the new state came into being; more basically, however, they seem to me to reflect deep contradictions in the spiritual foundations of the State of Israel and of the Zionist movement that gave it birth.

The government of the State of Israel includes a Ministry of Religions, with divisions for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Each of these religious groups is officially organized along community lines under the general supervision of the Ministry. The Jewish community—with which, in the present article, we are chiefly concerned—includes all Jews in the land, whether they are religious or not, the militant atheists as well as the most traditional of pietists. It is headed by the Chief Rabbi, whose office administers a network of rabbinical courts and councils and ordains Jewish ministers of religion. Marriage, divorce, inheritance, and similar matters of personal status fall under the official jurisdiction of the rabbinate and the rabbinical courts.

There is no civil marriage or divorce in Israel; ancient talmudic restrictions and regulations, which have long ceased to be operative among any but the most Orthodox, are the law of the land. Not only is there no civil marriage; there is not even free religious marriage. Jewish marriages in the State of Israel can be performed only by Orthodox rabbis, orthodoxly ordained, and that is true also of divorce. In fact, rabbis of non-Orthodox tendencies (there are only a few in the land) have no rabbinical standing whatever; they can perform no properly rabbinical functions and must limit themselves to what are regarded as lay activities.

This unparalleled ecclesiastical monopoly, going beyond even the restrictions on Protestants in Spain, is sometimes defended by American Orthodox apologists with the plea that there are really no restrictions on rabbinical functioning in Israel: "All rabbis who meet the qualifications required of members of the rabbinate in Israel and possess the degree of 'semikah,' which is awarded upon the completion of a course of study of biblical and rabbinic law," so runs one such apology, "are granted full rights and privileges by the Ministry of Religions." But these "qualifications" are set solely by the Orthodox rabbinate; it alone confers the degree of ordination ("semikah"). So that what this apology really amounts to is the assurance that the Orthodox rabbinate permits all those to function as rabbis who meet the Orthodox standards it imposes; those who do not recognize these standards but have standards and qualifications of their own, reflecting their own convictions as to the meaning of Jewish faith, are rigidly excluded *by law* from exercising the essential rabbinical functions. This is how far the union of church and state has gone in Israel.

Kashrut (biblical-talmudic law as to forbidden foods) is officially maintained in all public institutions, and this has been reasonably defended on the ground that otherwise observant Jews would not be able to make use of these institutions. But there is also a government ban on the import of non-kosher meat, so that in effect some measure of *kashrut* is enforced by the police power. This in turn has been defended on the ground that under present critical conditions so little meat is imported that if complete freedom of import were permitted, there would be virtually no

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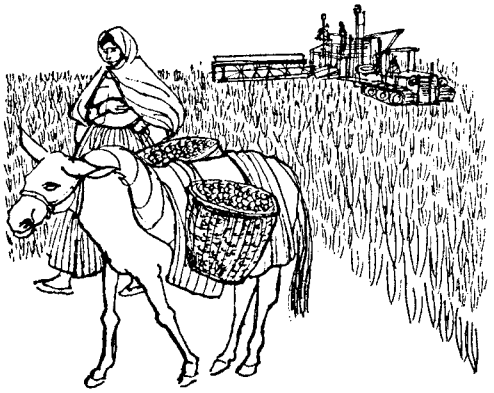
kosher meat available for the observant. There is something to this argument, but recent pronouncements of Orthodox spokesmen would seem to indicate that they envisage the present emergency regulations as the forerunner of permanent legislation on *kashrut*.

Sabbath observance enforcement is diverse and irregular. In some cities, such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, public transportation on the Sabbath is forbidden; in others (Haifa), it is permitted. No attempt is made by government agencies to enforce the Sabbath in private life, though there are super-zealous groups who try to do that on their own, not without violence. But such excesses are frowned upon by most sections of the population, and I think it is fair to say that in the matter of Sabbath enforcement, existing legislation and official practice do not go beyond the "blue laws" with which we in America are familiar.

EDUCATION is another area in which church and state meet and clash; it is, in fact, one of the most serious points of political conflict in Israel. Compulsory elementary education was enacted for the first time under the new state, but there does not exist a system of public education in Israel such as we know it in this country. There are, in fact, four school systems, each supported and in a measure supervised by the government; these systems, or "trends," are defined in strictly ideological-political terms. The largest is the Labor "trend," which in 1950-51 had 37 per cent of the school population in its institutions; it is socialist and secularist in outlook. Next come the schools of the General Zionists, with 33 per cent of the children; these schools are bourgeois-secularist in orientation. The religious Zionist organization, Mizrahi, has its own system, with 18.5 per cent, and the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael has one of its own, with 6.5 per cent. The remaining five per cent attend a variety of miscellaneous institutions. (I deal here only with Jewish schools; Muslims and Christians have their institutions as well, many state-supported.)

All attempts at amalgamation, or even federation, of these "party" school systems have failed. Indeed, the tensions increased recently as a result of the rapid extension of an improvised educational machinery set up to deal with the flood of immigrants, especially those from the Arab countries. The agencies to receive and "process" the immigrants were manned largely with militantly secularist young Labor Zionists, who, it is charged, did not hesitate to engage in "soul-snatching practices." There is considerable evidence that they made it a prime concern to detach children from their religious parents and indoctrinate them with their own contempt for the "outworn superstitions" of traditional Judaism. More than one cabinet crisis resulted from these conflicts over educational administration and policy. Some sort of compromise was finally effected, but no one believes it can be lasting.

The dominant culture in the State of Israel is secular, far more obviously and flamboyantly so than in the United States. How, then, did this close connection between church and state, this persistent intervention



of the government into the religious affairs of the people, come about? By and large, it is a carry-over from the British mandatory regime, which itself incorporated a good deal of the medieval "community" legislation of Turkish law. It is important to recognize that there is no new legislation establishing the legal status of organized religion in Israel. The State of Israel, as a matter of fact, has no constitution, although a rather impressive draft has for some years been lying on the table. That the state has no constitution, nor the prospect of one in the foreseeable future, is itself very significant and casts a revealing light on the complexities of the unavowed but very real *Kulturkampf* that is under way in Israel today.

ISRAEL has no constitution, largely because the Orthodox forces, at least those who set the tone of Orthodox thinking, envisage the state as a kind of theocracy in which talmudic law must be made normative, if not actually the law of the land.

Orthodox thought, it is true, is divided on the exact relation of traditional *halakah* (religious law) to the state, but the prevailing opinion is definitely against the setting up of a modern constitutional structure along Western lines. The Labor and General Zionists, on the other hand, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, are thinking in terms of a lay, perhaps even anti-clerical, state, on the Continental model, although they are ready to make concessions if necessary. But the secularists, however they may agree on basic constitutional matters, are sharply divided on immediate economic and political issues.

The leading party, the moderate Labor Zionists (Mapai), has not been able to cooperate with the General Zionists because of wide divergence in social and economic outlook; nor can it cooperate with the

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Mapam, because of the latter's pro-Communist, pro-Soviet orientation. And since it has no majority of its own, the Mapai is forced to depend for a working parliamentary majority upon the support of the parties of the Religious Bloc. In order to obtain and keep this support, which is never more than precarious, the Mapai has been compelled to agree to hold in abeyance all basic constitutional and legal questions and to operate on a provisional basis.

I have mentioned the Religious Bloc. In Israel, the institutional forces of religion are organized politically, and indeed they sometimes give the impression that they place most of their hope for what they take to be the cause of religion in Israel upon the effectiveness of their political organization. The aim of the Religious Bloc seems to be primarily to promote the enactment and enforcement of rabbinic law and to prevent legislation in any way running counter to such law. The most recent example is the cabinet crisis over the proposed law providing for compulsory national service for women—in agriculture, hospitals, and offices—as the equivalent of military service for men. Most of the Orthodox are opposed to this legislation, not primarily on social or cultural grounds, but as a matter of religious principle, just as they are opposed in principle to women serving as judges, lawyers, or even as witnesses in courts of law.

To stave off conflict, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion last year postponed consideration of this law for a time. The time is now up and Ben Gurion proposes to introduce the bill in the near future. As a consequence, the representatives of the two ultra-Orthodox parties of the Religious Bloc—the Agudat Yisrael and the Agudat Yisrael Workers group—have left the cabinet and withdrawn their support from the government. (The other two parties of the Religious Bloc—the Mizrahi and the Mizrahi Workers group—have, for the time being, withheld action.) The defecting parties have five seats in the Kenesset and hold the balance of power, since even with their votes the government's strength is only sixty-five to the opposition's fifty-five. The Kenesset was in recess till November 5th, and the matter may have been patched up by then, but it is symptomatic in a small way of the aims and purposes of the religious forces in politics as well as of the explosive tensions that lie just beneath the surface of Israeli life.

I do not want to give the impression that these tensions and conflicts are exclusively the result of Orthodox intransigence. Far from it; the secularists on their side—socialists and bourgeois, not to speak of Communists and semi-Communists—are quite as set in their determination to complete the thoroughgoing secularization of Israeli life. It is not easy for an American to picture the situation since our history has never really had anything comparable.

The "laic" sentiment in Israel reminds one of the anti-clerical movement in France a generation ago. It is more than simply anti-clerical; it is anti-religious, and reflects a challenge to Jewish religion on the part of an aggressive, proselytizing secularist quasi-religion making its bid for the possession of the minds and souls of the younger generation. I do not think that the more moderate leaders of either socialist or bourgeois Zionism look upon things this way, but there can be little doubt that what I have said fairly well describes the outlook of the more militant and active members of their parties. They are engaged in a crusade to bring "enlightenment" to the masses by eradicating "religious superstition" and enthroning a sociological materialism in its place. This brings me to the basic problem of religion in Israel.

RELIGION in Israel means ritual observance as prescribed by talmudic law. I do not want to impugn the genuine piety of many of the Orthodox rabbis and laymen or to belittle the profundity of their religious concern; the fact remains, however, that by and large, among the Orthodox and non-Orthodox, believers and unbelievers, religion is understood primarily, if not solely, in terms of a rigid legalistic ritualism. Religion in the sense of a search for the "substance of life," in the sense of a constantly renewed personal decision and commitment, religion in the sense of existential encounter between man and God, is very little understood in Israel.

Martin Buber, whose religious thinking has exerted such profound influence upon Christians and Jews in the Western world, is virtually without influence in the land where he has been teaching and writing for two decades. Religion, to the Israeli man in the street —in fact, to all but a handful of intellectuals—is what

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the Orthodox rabbinate defines it as being: meticulous ritual observance.

Religion, understood in this way, is rejected by a considerable part of the Jews of Israel, especially the younger people, and is ignored by many more. Indeed, religion is by and large held to be the concern of the older generation, the product of the European ghetto.

I vividly recall the astonishment of a number of Israeli visitors to this country—some Orthodox believers, others outright unbelievers—at the sight of young men and women attending divine services and participating eagerly in discussions on faith and life. Inevitably, the question came: "But are they *really* religious?"—which always meant, "Are they really observant?" It seemed to be taken for granted that young people could not be observant, and that not being observant, they could not possibly be "religious" in any recognizable sense.

This polarization of religion and unreligion in Israel is prone to go to extremes. The religious forces, with some exceptions, are set upon retaining the forms, procedures, and cultural milieu of the East European ghetto synagogue; the unreligious elements are simply waiting for the older generation to disappear for Israel to come into its own. They are not too much afraid of the influx of Oriental Jews who still preserve their ancient religious tradition; they feel they can absorb and indoctrinate them, especially the youth—and I think that they are not far from right. Between one extreme and the other, there appears to be no middle ground or third way. That is what makes the religious outlook in Israel so ominous.

And yet there are qualifications and mitigations. In Orthodox ranks, there are signs of life—especially on the religious *kibbutzim* (collectives) operated by the Mizrahi Workers group. Here a heartening attempt is being made to deepen the understanding of religion and to bring religious observance in line with the needs and realities of contemporary life.

On the other side, there are signs of a new religious searching among certain sections of the younger generation of native-born Israelis. Their grandfathers were Orthodox; their fathers, atheists or "heretics" in violent revolt; they, however, are beginning to feel that there must be more profound dimensions to life than secularism, with all its "enlightenment," can fathom. They are somehow revolted at the crude nationalistic idolatry that has converted so many of the holidays of the Jewish liturgical year into chauvinistic folk-festivals and has even dared to expunge the name of God from biblical and rabbinic literature. They can take their nationalism more naturally, less hysterically, and they find that something more than nationalism and a vanishing social utopianism is needed for meaningful human existence.

It is hard to estimate the significance of this trend, but it is already documented in a number of memoirs and collections of letters (see particularly the two volumes of letters published by the Kibbutz En Harod as a memorial to two of its young members, Rafi Maltz and Hillel Levi, who perished in the war for independence). That something is stirring, that the spirit is quickening, in the wastelands of Israeli secularism cannot be denied. Something new is emerging of which there is good reason to be hopeful.

WE must guard against the temptation of applying the peculiar American pattern of church-state relations as a kind of universal criterion by which to judge institutions and practices of all times and nations. Our American pattern is, in part at least, the product of our particular history and experience; nor is it by any means unequivocal or free from ambiguity. Britain has a church-state pattern that is very different, yet surely freedom and religion are as well preserved there as here. We should not condemn everything in Israel simply because it does not fall in with our notions. Yet there remain certain relatively universal values and principles that we feel are implied in the modern democratic idea. Among these is freedom of religion and this includes the rejection of the claim of any religious group to a legal monopoly of religious functioning as well as the rejection of governmental enforcement of religious observance beyond what is necessary in the interest of public order.

Judged by these elementary standards, Jews in Israel do not possess full religious freedom, and there seems little likelihood of their soon acquiring it. Indeed, some of the secularists, for all their anti-clericalism, are not too eager for it, and it is not difficult to see why. One of the Orthodox arguments in opposition to civil, or even non-Orthodox, marriage is that such "laxity" would make possible mixed marriages (one partner non-Jewish), and that would "disintegrate" the Jewish people. Such arguments—I hesitate to characterize them, but they are sufficiently reminiscent—would naturally appeal to the fanatical Jewish nationalists however secular-minded, for in the conception of such a one, Jewishness is a blood-and-soil nationalism. No wonder that so many secular Zionists are of divided mind about religious freedom.

Yet I do not think that either they or their Orthodox colleagues will be able indefinitely to hold back what seems to me to be a most essential democratic reform in the State of Israel. Barring a world catastrophe that would engulf everything, religious freedom for Jews will come to Israel, but will come only after a painful conflict that may culminate in an open *Kulturkampf*. To prevent this, and to ease the way to reform, seems to me to be both the task and the test of responsible statemanship.

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The Charms of Anarchism

OUR house has just been honored by a visit from Ammon Hennacy, the Christian anarchist who seems to be on his way into the Catholic Church. We had never met him before but we liked him from the start.

Ammon recently completed a seven-day fast marking the seventh anniversary of the dropping of the atom bomb on the women and children of Hiroshima. It is good to know that somebody is doing penance for this shameful chapter of American history. At times Ammon strikes you as an American reincarnation of Peter Maurin. There is an Easy Essay ring to his saying: "Love without wisdom and courage is sentimentality, as with the ordinary church member. Courage without wisdom and love is foolhardiness, as with the ordinary soldier. Wisdom without love and courage is cowardice, as with the ordinary intellectual. But a man with love, courage and wisdom is one in a billion and will change the world, as with Jesus, Buddha or Gandhi."

Ammon hasn't paid taxes for nine years. He is against voting, even if it means putting reactionaries into key political offices. A lean vegetarian with a shock of gray hair, he works hard for farmers down around Phoenix, Arizona, when he isn't fasting or picketing the Department of Internal Revenue. He is proud of a big medal of St. Francis and the Wolf that Dorothy Day gave him and he has probably sold more copies of *The Catholic Worker* than any other non-Catholic.

Ammon is such a likable anarchist that you can take almost anything from him, even the cracks about good politicians, or the Hopi Indian records he plays on the victrola at 6.30 Sunday morning, full volume. And he gets you thinking about anarchism.

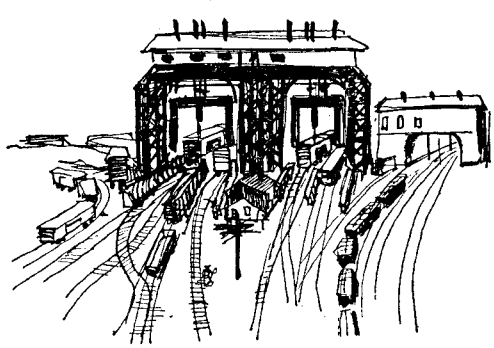
Anarchism used to be a big thing in the labor movement. In Europe the anarcho-syndicalists were something to be reckoned with, particularly among Latins like the French and Spaniards. Everyone has heard of the anarchist unions of Spain and the part they played in the civil war. But lately you don't hear so much about them in Europe. Between Fascism and Communism they have been pretty well ground to pieces. Only the Socialist and Catholic unions have been able to survive that treatment.

In America, where conditions have been more favorable, anarcho-syndicalism enjoyed some success in the Wobbly movement, the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW's. They were strong in the lumber towns of the Northwest, in the hard metal mines of the Rocky Mountain states, where men like Wild Bill Haywood led them in many a bloody engagement with the rampant and ruthless legions of early American capitalism. In 1912 they came East and won a remarkable victory in the great Lawrence textile strike. The movement dwindled as the times grew easier and the union business more respectable. The hungry years of the Depression could not revive them. The CIO did the job of organization that needed to be done, and even a tightly-organized bunch of revolutionaries like the Communists were lucky to get through the forties with a few isolated battalions of American workers still under their command.

(Since their ouster from the CIO in 1949 the Communist unions in this country are down to one sizable union in the electrical industry, Harry Bridges' longshoremen on the West Coast and Hawaii, a few equipment workers, a few store workers in New York, some of the hard metal miners that Haywood once led, and assorted scatterings. In the CIO they still have strength in the Packinghouse Workers and in the big Ford local of the Auto Workers. But that's about all.)

WHERE the Stalinists failed, the loosely-organized Wobblies could hardly be expected to succeed. They exist today mainly as a reminder of our wilder, tougher and more picturesque past. But they do keep alive one doctrine that should interest Catholics and that is a more violent version, or perversion, of Pius XI's recommendation that "so far as is possible, the work-contract [should] be somewhat modified by a partnership contract" so that "workers and other employees thus become sharers in ownership or management or participate in some fashion in the profits received."

The Wobblies say that the workers should oust the employers and take over, period. But they are like the Pope and unlike the Marxists in this, that they do not believe in taking over by way of a vast bureaucracy of state-owned industry, but through direct participation



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of the workers in control of the company or enterprise for which they work. This much is good sense. It shows a healthy skepticism about the chances of freedom under a regime in which the state has gobbled up every source of power and security. It also shows some appreciation of one of the central problems of our time, namely, how to restore some pride and sense of workmanship to workers who have been all but atomized by the headlong rush of machines in pursuit of a profit.

Anarchists are usually interesting, colorful characters. Nearly all of them have courage and some have love, but if I could say that I ever knew one who also had wisdom I suppose I would become an anarchist myself. I pray that Ammon will persevere in his present intention to become a Catholic, but I do not think that there is aid and comfort for anarchism in the wisdom of the Church. And this despite the extended, and often eloquent, efforts on the part of the Catholic Worker movement to find such aid and comfort. (There is an excellent, and highly sympathetic, Profile of Dorothy Day by Dwight MacDonald in the October 4th and 11th issues of *The New Yorker* which describes some of these methods.)

I don't think you have to go to St. Thomas or the Popes to justify the state. The Bible itself is clear enough. Professor C. H. McIlwain, one Harvard intellectual who had both wisdom and courage, used to tell his classes in government that "the political theory of the Catholic Church is bounded on the one side by the statement of St. Peter that 'we must obey God rather than men' and on the other by the statement of St. Paul, 'let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God.' " He might have added that it is divided down the middle by the statement of Christ, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

THE value of the Christian anarchist is that he often focuses attention on St. Peter's boundary at times when more timid souls hasten to excuse their disobedience to God by their excessive fear of men. But this value should never blind us to the great good sense of Christ and St. Paul, who remind the anarchist that the Christian way, within the limitation of St. Peter's boundary, is a way of obedience and submission, even to an ungodly mammoth of a state like the Roman Empire.

The Church teaches further that there are three degrees of humility: first, obedience to superiors; second, obedience to equals; and third and highest, obedience to inferiors. On all three counts, it seems to me, Christian anarchism retains its anti-state bias only at the expense of its Christianity. You cannot make a Christian system out of a theory of perpetual revolt and resistance. Revolt and resistance may be justified on the ground of a prior obligation to God rather than men, but if revolts are successful, then the next step is responsible government.

On the continent of Europe, where ideology has a charm all its own that non-Europeans cannot understand, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism had a long and distinguished career—at least as long as parliamentary government was vigorous and the freedom to dissent was unchallenged by either Fascists or Communists. The English did not go for it and neither have the Americans, with the exception of the few Wobbly successes outlined above. This is perhaps because we are not an intellectual people, but I prefer to think that with all our faults, which are many and great, we have too much common sense. Dorothy Day may wind up a saint, but fortunately the Church has never insisted that we emulate all the theories of the saints. Only their heroic example.

JOHN C. CORT.

THE STAGE

CHARTOCK'S GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

WIT and *esprit* are lacking in the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire S. M. Chartock has assembled, but what surely is of more consequence is the impeccable musicianship of these evenings at the Mark Hellinger. "The Mikado," with which the American ensemble inaugurated a four-week New York visit, was of a vocal opulence which perpetually blandished the ear. Particularly in the lovely opening of the second act—"Braid the Raven Hair," the Madrigal, "The Sun and I"—the sound was ravishing. So much delicacy, such a honeyed smoothness and clarity, would not have dishonored Mozart.

Yet it is, after all, "The Mikado" which is being sung, and not "The Magic Flute." And Gilbert's satiric pleasures are unaccountably blunted by the Chartock group. Time, no doubt, and familiarity will breed in them the affectionate license these comic masterworks demand; at present, the company is performing with a literal rather than an imaginative distinction. Conceding even this, though, there are limitations inherent in an American G & S repertoire which should, I think, be recognized. One may expect legitimately precise diction and most proficient music-making, in both of which the Chartock ensemble is rich. But the special inanity, the exuberance, a style so tart and acrid in its outline—these are not to be assumed by taking thought. The essential G & S is so much a blend of national feeling and the social flavor as to defy appropriation, and the present company, moreover, misses it most agreeably.

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It is precisely inanity and elation which make themselves felt in the passages between Martyn Green and Ella Halman. Both are veteran Savoyards; neither possesses a rich nor remarkable voice; but somehow they bewitch. Their touch is light, dry, astringent; their majestic conceits, iridescent and full-blown, expire deliciously on the thorns of wit. Beside them, the fluting sopranos cloy rather than charm, and a dutiful, apathetic chorus puts a touch of frost to the quicksilver Gilbert shrewdness.

Theatrically, the evening is faultless: the production handsomely mounted and the cast tastefully displayed. I trust I have suggested adequately the profusion of distinguished vocalism, but special note must be made of Robert Rounseville's lyric tenor, one of the best in the American theatre, and certainly this company's wisest acquisition. It is my final impression that, whatever one's reservations about this repertoire, we are all deeply in Mr. Chartock's debt. (*At the Mark Hellinger through November 15; preliminary to a national tour.*)

FAITH AND PRUDENCE

LOTTIE Michelson's comedy, with which the Blackfriars Guild opened another season, is "Catholic" only in its peripheral details; neither the author nor the admirable off-Broadway group appears to be aiming at anything other than a light commercial success. As such, I think they brought off a small but genuine entertainment. The piece itself is only a species of magazine fiction (rather extended) about a New England spinster's late-blooming romance with an Irish sailor, and Miss Michelson cannot really be said to have refurbished this tired fable. Yet her loosely drawn sketches of some conventional people permit a latitude of interpretation most engagingly capitalized upon by several excellent actors. The quality of Blackfriars performance has never seemed to me higher; Gerald Buckley, Mary Westland, Allan Cary and Edward Wrenn brought personal qualities to their roles which gave Miss Michelson's thin material an unwarranted weight.

The author showed a pleasant fancy in some of her touches (notably a talking window manikin) but her play would have profited from shrewd cutting and rather accelerated direction. On its own slight terms, however, "Faith and Prudence" is agreeable and accomplished, surely deserving of the six-week engagement the Guild has scheduled. Miss Michelson may still be a novice at her trade, but I cannot see why she should be censured severely for her inadequacies, while Mary Chase is blandly acquitted of some of the barbarisms to be encountered in "Bernardine." (*At the Blackfriars Theatre, 320 West 57th Street, through November 25.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

KEEPING THAT STIFF UPPER LIP

IT is amazing that the English, who can pack such an emotional wallop in their literature, are so blase about emotion in their movies. "Breaking Through" (which was called "The Sound Barrier" in England where it was made) is one of the best pictures about planes and the men who fly them I've ever seen; and what's more, it really tries to tackle the complicated problems connected with the suffering and emotions of pilots and those who wait for them on the ground.

"Breaking Through" has a literate and thoughtful script (written by Terence Rattigan) which was expertly produced and directed by David Lean, who shows an understanding not only of flying but of the art of cinema as well. My main argument with most of the movies about airplanes is that if you've seen one you've seen them all; there is very little a director can do with a plane—except show the hero in it manipulating gadgets while his wife below wrings her hands. But the Lean-and-Rattigan combination thought up some new tricks and ideas to convey speed and motion in their story about jet planes, like the close-up of wheat bending to the ground as the plane whizzes by, or the rapidly changing views of the earth as the test pilot and his wife fly from England to Egypt over Channel, plains, Paris, Alps, Mediterranean, wise-looking statues in Greece, and finally an unperturbed Sphinx.

David Lean has also directed well the good cast who enact the interesting story: Ralph Richardson as the pioneer airman who now manufactures planes designed to fly faster than sound, Ann Todd as his daughter who bitterly resents her wealthy, ambitious father after the death of her brother in his first solo flight (the boy "jolly well" knew he wasn't born to be a flier), Nigel Patrick as Ann's husband, a test pilot with more courage than imagination, John Justin as this young couple's good friend, a test pilot with both daring and inspiration, Dinah Sheridan as his matter-of-fact, well-balanced wife, and others portraying various friends, relatives and co-workers.

Besides its remarkable feeling for speed and motion, "Breaking Through" has several extraordinary tense scenes, best of which comes near the end of the film when Ann realizes the agony which her father undergoes when one of his pilots makes a test flight in a jet plane. It is unfortunate that this usually unemotional man couldn't have revealed his feelings a little earlier in the game. Perhaps there wouldn't have been any plot at all if we'd known all the time that he wasn't really callous about the other people's lives he was sac-

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rificing. The fact remains, however, that Mr. Richardson's stiff upper lip and glaring eyes do soften, and we finally realize that he suffers as much as the officers in "Command Decision" and "Twelve O'Clock High" and other war pictures when they send young men out to die. "Breaking Through" deserves applause, not only for being a well-made action movie with ideas, but also for not trying to come up with pat answers for all the problems it proposes. It succeeds in putting over the idea that to have courage one must also have understanding, understanding that comes from the heart as well as the head. But I can still hear Ann Todd's provocative question: "Is the ability to travel 2,000 miles an hour a blessing to the race?"

THE English have also sent us another of those witty and satirical comedies in which everyone seems to have a grand time kidding the English. Effectively produced and directed by Ronald Neame, "The Promoter" stems from Arnold Bennett's novel, *The Card,* and gives Alec Guinness in the title role further opportunity to exhibit his talents as one of the screen's leading comedians. His innocent face, skeptical half-smile and amiable manner (even when up to chicanery) are perfect for the role of Denry, the charwoman's son, who rises (in one of Bennett's Five Towns that lie so close to the heart of England) from an "umble solicitor's clerk" to rent collector, and then to a promoter of an educational entertainment, on which he makes so much money he is able to organize a Thrift Club and finally become mayor of Bursely. Oh, he's a sly one all right. And while you never quite believe that Denry could get away with some of his tricks and projects, Guinness does make you believe in Denry.

Besides his lower-class, continually astonished mother (Veronica Turleigh) there are three women who figure largely in Denry's crowded life: a very upper-class countess (Valerie Hobson) who takes Denry in stride and rather admires his pluck, a dancing teacher (Glynis Johns) who is up to Denry's schemes and can contrive a few of her own that are just as audacious, and a lovely, shy girl (Petula Clark) whose sweet disposition finally wins Denry's heart.

The Edwardian sets and costumes in "The Promoter" are handsomely photographed, and the picture provides a great deal of fun. While it is not the best of the Guinness comedies, it is still a must for discriminating audiences who like their movies adult.

ANOTHER new import is "The Berliner," a modern allegory made in post-war Germany and being shown in this country with English subtitles by Herman Weinberg and a commentary written and recited by Henry Morgan. At times Morgan's comments are funnier than what you see on the screen, but as allegories go, this one is quite amusing.

It starts in the year 2048 and has flashbacks to pre- and post-war Berlin; and as it tells its zany tale about Otto Averageman (nicely played by Gert Frobe) it is well loaded with wisecracks about the housing shortage, man shortage, food shortage, postwar confusion and red tape, and various other aspects of the difficulty of keeping body and soul together in Germany today. Before the film gets around to the funeral of Mr. Averageman (and the conclusion that you can't kill the average man so easily: what we should bury is hatred, fear, war, etc.) you may get a little tired of its satire and droll lines. In any case you have to admit that the Germans were imaginative to come up with an amusing fable of this kind. Perhaps its hilarious scenes showing diplomats in session should be shown at the U.N.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

"STAMPED AND REGISTERED"

Chicago, Illinois

TO the Editors: There *is,* in spite of all our protests to the contrary, a kind of Catholic spirit in this country which is unified, as Father Wagener says, and pervasive. It is a spirit which does not represent the Church but which, because it speaks powerfully through some diocesan papers, through magazines, through some nominally Catholic pressure groups, has become identified with the Church, especially by the Blanshards outside who eagerly light on every piece of debris and call it evidence of the ruins of an archaic and reactionary institution. In addition, unfortunately, there are some within the Church who in their own interests have made a similar confusion and who now seek to solidify and perpetuate this so-called Catholic spirit as the official spirit of the Church in this country.

What are some of the characteristics of this spirit? Most important of all, it is prodigiously critical: critical of the secular press, critical of certain men in political life, critical of liberals, critical of educators, critical of intellectuals, critical of artists—and portentously critical of fellow Catholics who dare to disagree.

It is not always mistaken in the objects of its attacks (often there is more than sufficient provocation); but it is nearly always offensive in its tone. Specifically, the most disturbing comment one might make on its method is that it lacks charity and reason. This spirit is anti-intellectual: it looks with hostility and suspicion upon those in the political or social or artistic spheres who approach the problems of this world not in terms

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of black and white, but as complex and shifting and fraught with fearful ambiguities. Outside the sphere of faith and morals, this spirit seeks to stifle dissent, to close off the channels of communication except those that reflect the approved party-line. It organizes boycotts and encourages pickets and attempts, in authoritarian fashion, to impose its opinions on others. Down at the parish level, for example, it is so sweeping as to withdraw *America* and The Commonweal from sale —and yet, as is true of my church at home, to sell and to recommend from the altar the Brooklyn *Tablet* in a New York church.

As a result, where this spirit operates, the clergy and laity are truly narrow and uninformed. The orthodoxy that is achieved is not vigorous and lively; it is dull and dispirited, without savor; it is the orthodoxy not of the living but of the dead.

I am a former teacher of English at a state university and I am currently writing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago. Naturally my contacts vary widely among Catholics and non-Catholics. I am sorry when non-Catholics show that their conception of the Church is formulated out of the material which the Catholic party-line spirit has given them. And I am full of anger when Catholic party-liners (for want of a better term) regard my position as an anomalous one: i.e. when I deny the fundamental goodness of Senator McCarthy's crusade.

At the present time, the opportunities for Catholics to take part in American intellectual life are rich and varied. Yet there is real danger of a new prejudice rising up: prejudice toward Catholics by Catholics. Newman's beautiful and true description of Catholicism in the *Apologia* might well be used as a lesson for us all:

> Catholic Christendom is no simple exhibition of religious absolutism, but it presents a continuous picture of authority and private judgment alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide;—it is a vast assemblage of human beings with wilful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one by the beauty and majesty of a superhuman power—into what may be called a large reformatory or training school, not to be sent to bed, not to be buried alive, but for the melting, refining, and molding, as in some moral factory, by an incessant noisy process (if I may proceed to another metaphor), of the raw material of human nature, so excellent, so dangerous, so capable of divine purposes.

We are, indeed, not here to be buried alive. We are all here in the Church to work out our salvation from such diverse human material.

JOSEPH M. DUFFY, JR.

McCARTHYISM

Lake Village, Arkansas

TO the Editors: One thing that has appalled me since my return from the Far East a year ago is the indecent haste with which so many of the clergy run to embrace and canonize any one who is "anti-Communist." I would rather return to my Chinese Communist prison cell than avail myself of Senator McCarthy's "protection." He is as great—if not a greater—threat to American freedom than the military might of the Kremlin, and, believe me, I do not underestimate either the Kremlin's might or its cleverness.

My missionary career in China ended in a Communist court in which accusations were taken as facts, charges as proofs, and in which the police announced that "defense is not necessary; we never make a mistake; when we arrest you, you're guilty; a defense is only necessary in corrupt bourgeois society where they have corrupt officials."

As a result of that experience, I cling desperately to a principle that is one of the foundation stones of our democratic way of life, the principle that man is innocent until he is proved guilty, and that includes people like Alger Hiss, too. God help all of us if we ever abandon that principle. If you must betray democracy in order to save it, why bother?

(Rev.) LEON SULLIVAN, O.F.M.

BOOKS

Aiken's Search for Self - Awareness

S. M. FITZGERALD

FOR many years Conrad Aiken, gifted and neglected poet and storyteller, has been developing and working according to a theory of art of his own, i.e., that the inner workings of the artist himself are the very stuff of art. In 1927 he wrote to Malcolm Cowley, referring to an earlier novel, *Blue Voyage*:

> At all events, I am much interested in *this*—the autobiography turned novel, given shape and distance. And it seemed to me a useful thing to do, at this point in my life: I mean to give myself *away*, for the benefit of any stray psychologist of literature who might be interested in diagnosing the case of the author of Forslin, et al. And incidentally to

S. M. Fitzgerald has written literary criticism for the New Republic and other publications.

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twist the thing into a design of its own, to make it stand on its own legs as an organism.

Mr. Aiken's latest book, *Ushant* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, $4.50), which is not properly a novel but rather an autobiographical narrative, represents a further extension of this purpose. Calling himself D. (it was Demarest in *Blue Voyage*), Aiken now apparently proposes to give himself away for the benefit of all comers, with diagnosis provided by the author himself. He believes that he has found out the secret sources of the poet, as well of the man, that he has been. He now says that it is his duty as an artist to make known these findings:

> . . . if it was the writer's business, or the poet's, to be as conscious as possible, and his primary obligation, then wouldn't this impose upon him the still deeper obligation of being conscious of his *own* workings, the workings of his psyche, of the springs and deficiencies and necessities and compulsions, the whole sublimal drive which had made him a writer to begin with, and along with the work itself, to present, as it were, the explication—? Wouldn't this be the next mandatory step, the artist's plain duty? that he take the machine apart and show how it worked?

Without this explicitly stated theory, and without knowledge of his long preoccupation with the "genetics" of poetry, with the psyche of the poet, as such, it would be easy for the stray psychologist of literature to believe that much of the intensive self-revelation of *Ushant* was in fact compulsive. Indeed, the possibility that it is, on some level, should not be ruled out, although the outpouring has been rationalized and thus in a sense 'consciously' chosen both as means and end in this work.

Complete self-awareness is symbolized for Aiken by the Ile d'Ouessant, the island of Ushant, a bit of land facing both east and west, off Sussex, at the head of the English Channel. "Here—the chart gave warning —to approach at all, in thick weather, was of extreme danger: the currents frequently set right on shore; the tides were strong: and the bottom so level, but with 'local irregularities' that soundings were of little assistance, the lead all but useless: to judge the 'distance westward of the meridian of outward dangers,' of those savage claws, was all but impossible."

Drawn equally by England—the beautiful house at Saltinge, looking out upon Ushant among its rocks and shoals and foamspray—and the New England of his beloved ancestors, Conrad Aiken appears to have coursed the Atlantic, and his life—like some Flying Dutchman, his mind and soul doomed to an endless

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voyaging and seeking. The present volume logs the journey, opening with a real Atlantic crossing at the end of the war, through worlds of fact and worlds of dream since childhood. Interspersed among the episodes of the passage are the ruminations and reflections of the mariner. The account is dense, sometimes harrowing in detail. The other passengers, strangers, family, friends, fellow artists, are reported upon, often in ways which reveal more of the commentator than his elaborate self-description and analysis. An obviously great effort is made to understand the meaning of the long journey and all its happenings, in their deepest effects upon himself.

But it is in understanding that one feels Aiken has singularly failed, perhaps because he has insistently assumed and sought the same source for his poetic gift and for what the stray psychologist may well consider his wanton egoistical destructiveness. The beauty wrought by the one, and the disorder brought about by the other—can we believe them inseparable? He concludes that the source of both lay in some genius for loving, and living, life, that was strong among his ancestors, and which found its culmination, for him, in the moment in his Savannah boyhood, when "after the desultory early-morning quarrel came the half-stifled scream, and the sound of his father's voice counting three, and the two loud pistol shots; and he had tiptoed into the dark room where the two bodies lay motionless, and apart, and, finding them dead, found himself possessed of them forever."

IT is characteristic of his inverted and unreal understanding of events and meanings that Aiken comes in *Ushant* to describe this tragic murder-suicide of his parents as a triumph of their vitality and talent for living consciously and fully, of an *"egoisme a deux . . .* of astonishing power, and complexity, and beauty." Their death seems to him, in retrospect, a kind of work of art, although they had otherwise "nowhere achieved, and nowhere left, the perfected artifact which, on their own admission, was the ultimate good, and the ultimate obligation of the creative mind, and of creative civilization." Therefore, "as he looked back at these, and at their immobility, as of artifact, he knew that he was irrevocably dedicated to a lifelong—if need be—search for an equivalent to it all, in terms of his own life, or work; and an equivalent that these two angelic people would have thought acceptable."

His loved—and, we discern, hated—friend, T. S. Eliot, once woundingly said to him, "You do not know the meaning of words." The bite of the Tsetse, as he is called in *Ushant,* carried no sleeping sickness in this instance; clearly it stings yet. And it carried, certainly in this case, a germ of truth. For all the shimmer and beauty that is certainly present in much of his writing,

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perhaps it is precisely because Mr. Aiken does not know the meaning of the most important words he uses that the confusion in his understanding of himself and his life arises.

The talk is all of love, of life, and particularly of consciousness, regarded as a religion in itself. "Gnowthi (seauton)"—that was still the theme, the open sesame, Freud had merely picked up the magic words where Socrates, the prototype of highest man, had let them fall, and now at last the road was being opened for the only religion that was any longer tenable or viable, a poetic comprehension of man's position in the universe, and of his potentialities as poetic shaper of his own destiny, through self-knowledge and love. The final phase of evolution of man's mind itself to ever more inclusive consciousness: in that, and that alone, would he find the solvent of all things."

But what strangely *unconscious* conceptions of life and love are set forth, and how much self-deception and resultant misunderstanding there is in much that he says about them. He is aware of a voracious ego in himself, but seems to regard this as appropriate to a "priest of consciousness," entitled to have what he will from any fellow-creature. His adventures among the myriad "Loreleibchens" who have diverted him may be seen as a kind of ritual prostitution in the religion of consciousness, for its own sake, of experience indiscriminately sought. He seems largely unaware, however, of the possible cost to himself and others of all this exploring. His vanity assures him that he brightened the lives of many women, and gave them, in himself, a taste of life they would not otherwise have had. And so, he is able to say, he has really loved them, and loved life through loving them.

The author of *Ushant* takes unto himself the probable approval of Henry James: "That great consciousness, wouldn't it have found something to bless in D.'s 'consistent view,' the notion that consciousness was itself the chief of blessings?" I wonder if it would. I suspect that Henry James would have regarded Mr. Aiken as a moral and emotional stranger, and recognized him as a man whose intellectual processes were almost entirely, and unwittingly, bent to the service of his strong emotional impulse to narcissism.

Almost entirely bent, but not entirely. For there are the beautiful poems, the several fine stories that seem to have been made when he was free of the pressures of self-preoccupation and *able* to consider and celebrate the other things he loves. But surely Mr. Aiken is wrong in supposing that the best of his work as a poet comes from the romantic *self*-absorption (so different from the self-taste of Hopkins) which deeply underlies both his personal history and the theory of art he has developed.

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The Land of Sage and Sagas

THE WONDERFUL COUNTRY. By Tom Lea. Little, Brown. $3.75.

By JOHN McKEON

"FROM low beneath the morning star a luminous faint pallor climbed the sky. It marked a line in the east, then reached slowly around the circuit of all the horizon, bringing the first gray shapes to the build of the dark earth, adding detail moment by moment in the dim developing light."

Early in *The Wonderful Country* Tom Lea uses this delicate tracery of words to delineate dawn in the Southwest of the 1880's and throughout the three hundred and eighty odd pages of the novel that follow, the foreshadowed promise of perception, clarity and understanding symbolized by the quote above is sustained. To state it flatly and at the beginning, *The Wonderful Country* is the finest novel of the Southwest yet penned and on a smaller canvas Tom Lea has succeeded in doing for the Rio Grande country what H. L. Davis' *Honey in the Horn* has done for the Northwest at the turn of the century and A. J. Guthrie's *Big Sky* for the early Far West—enabled the reader to know it intrinsically an well as extrinsically; in short, truthfully, thereby participating fully in the life of the characters portrayed. A greater gift than this a writer cannot make a reader.

For a writer to succeed in rendering the characters in a regional novel in their true perspective he must, inevitably, make the attempt in terms of the dominant characteristic of the region; the mystique of which the natives are, at the same time, perpetrators and victims. *The Wonderful Country* is therefore, inevitably, a parable of violence; on one level an always credible and fast moving adventure story despite its length and on a deeper level a symbolic tale of natural man in his wanderings east of Eden, haunted by the vision of freedom and struggling within the violent bondage of his present to achieve human dignity. There is no character in *The Wonderful Country* who is not, whether he will or no, forced to meet the violence inherent in the regional landscape and make his own separate peace with it. For Martin Brady, protagonist of the story, violence has become an inescapable condition of social as well as physical survival. Orphaned by violence while still little more than a child and avenging it with a murder of his own on the same night, he flees across the Rio Grande to be adopted in time by Mexican parents.

At the beginning of *The Wonderful Country* he is a paid *pistolero* in the employ of the patron of the hacienda on which his peon foster father labors. Traveling north across the Rio Grande as an armed guard of a band of smugglers in the employ of his patron he is temporarily crippled in an accident and it is

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there, in the American border town of Puerto and the surrounding country, that he is forced, as a result of his accident, to keep his spiritual appointment in Samarra.

The currents of violence eddy through and around the town of Puerto on all sides and there are no neutral parties. For Isaac Sterner, Prussian Jewish merchant who shelters Brady, violence is turned to profit by acting as the American agent of Martin's patron in the smuggling operations. For Major Colton, commandant of the Army Post at Puerto, violence is an opportunity to prove efficiency and therefore proof of social worth. For Tobe Sutton, his Negro sergeant in the 10th Cavalry, violence becomes the vehicle of social acceptance. For Don Cipriano Castro, future governor of Chihuahua and Martin's patron, violence is a necessary concomitant of his position in life. For Diego Casas, Martin's foster brother and his companion on the trip north, violence is a condition of life, like inclement weather, and must be suffered.

It is in Mague, the Apache subchief whose shadow looms over the surrounding country, that the violence of the region reaches its apogee, for a Mague's violence is God and flows through and from Him, filtered to purity by a clear conscience acting in the light of divinely revealed dogma. Native to a vast land of immense vistas where life is precious and men few, it is Mague alone of the characters of the story who inhabits the dark spirit of violence rather than being inhabited by it—and it is he alone who lives and dies at peace in the heart of darkness. For Mague, "the many knives turning in the soft flesh" assumes the nature of participation in a sacrament: it is by death that life receives its greatest affirmation; therefore the more death inflicted the more life affirmed and the more the essential sterility of the region is conquered.

It is in the climactic chase into Mexico and in the killing of Mague while in the employ of the Texas Rangers that Brady escapes the bondage of his heritage of violence. Torn between divided loyalties, to the land of his adoption and the land of his birth, he achieves partial peace by foreswearing the land of his adoption and the random and anarchic violence he associates with it in order to cross over the river in the employ of the codified violence of law and order as it is understood north of the border. It is by the Draconian measure of peace by mutilation that Brady escapes one bondage for another and on this cryptic note Tom Lea ends his parable of violence and the essentially tragic condition of natural man struggling for decency without knowledge of God.

That Tom Lea can write has already been amply demonstrated to those who have read his *Brave Bulls*. That he is also a fine enough writer to spin a profound parable in the guise of a superior Western is now apparent with the publication of *The Wonderful Country*. That it will have the commercial success it deserves with the audience addicted to superior adventure and Western yarns is undoubted, but that it is also a satisfying think-piece and solid enjoyment for a more discriminating audience is pure gravy and a free gift from a fine writer.

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Dostoevsky

FREEDOM and the TRAGIC LIFE: a Study in Dostoevsky. By Vyacheslav Ivanov. Noonday Press. $3.50.

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON

VYACHESLAV IVANOV does not argue, persuade, demonstrate; he assaults you. Like other Russian writers—Soloviev, Berdyaev, Doatoevsky himself—he makes a personal collision with an idea rather than a meeting. The result can only be judged like poetry (and significantly enough, Ivanov is also a poet). It cannot be logically judged or analyzed. It is its own excuse and it can only be accepted or rejected.

In a way, reading *Freedom and the Tragic Life* suggests an immediate comparison to the New Criticism. It points out the value of that approach—that laden down with textual arguments, detailed, precise, it still provides a framework for

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exchange, for discussion. And it also emphasizes some of the liability of our critical scholarship, particularly the absence of intuition, of a communication of real love.

Thus, Ivanov's rhapsodic statement of similarities between Dostoevsky and Greek tragedy comes almost to naught. In all of Dostoevsky's work, *Crime and Punishment* is the only rounded, aesthetic structure. In *The Possessed, The Idiot, The Brothers Karamazov,* the classic principle is exactly what is missing. To discuss Dostoevsky according to a vocabulary of "tragedies in epic dress," without making clear definitions of the pertinent terms, and without extended reference to the texts, is next to useless.

Yet, at the same time, Ivanov's intuitional approach succeeds admirably on an analysis of Alyosha's relation with the children at the end of the *Brothers Karamazov*. He sees in him the inspiration of a community, the making of a community. The children are united around him, and he is their unity, the symbol of the presence of Christ among the Russian people as a Community. For me, this increased the impact of the "Hurrah for Karamazov" with which the novel ends (I had always considered it as extremely tentative) and makes of it a significant affirmation.

This same brilliance of intuition is at work in Ivanov's discussion of Dostoevsky's nihilists, particularly those in *The Possessed*. Characteristically, he talks of them in terms of "male" and "female" principle, hardly exact critical tools. But using them, he interprets the nihilist as in revolt against Earth herself, and their tragedy as the revenge of the female spirit upon those who would calculate her. This is an illumination of one of Dostoevsky's most prophetic insights, of how the Russian intellectual denied the peasantry, his anticipation of the urban-peasant conflict which was to be at the heart of Stalinism.

I found one important point missing—but then it is almost always missing from Dostoevsky criticism. Ivanov understands the analysis of the godless society, of the tower of Babel. But he does not realize how profoundly Dostoevsky shared in that vision, of his tendencies toward a dictatorship of the God-fearing rather than of the Godless. Dostoevsky's Christ is a *Russian* Christ and his nationalism every bit as messianic as that of Stalinism. This is quite important in understanding his racism, and neither Ivanov nor most of the other critics, have given it the treatment it deserves.

Evaluation of such an uneven book is, of course, difficult. There is not a sustained excellence to *Freedom and the Tragic Life,* there are remarkable intuitions. And this, I suppose, makes it worthwhile, for all treatments of Dostoevsky are fragmentary, each point of illumination is important.

Points and Lines

THE HERBLOCK BOOK. Text and Cartoons by Herbert Block. Beacon Press. $2.75.

By DONALD McDONALD

WHAT Herbert Block, the Washington *Post's* stellar cartoonist, calls his "free-wheeling book of commentary" is the best informal, unpretentious commentary on America's recent and current political-social scene that I have seen.

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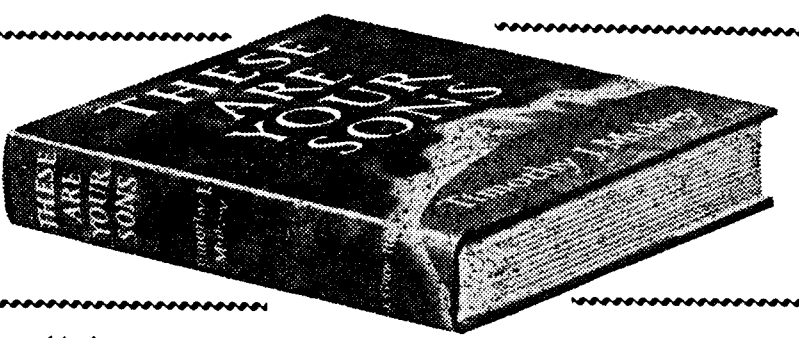

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dant discomfort must be more than compensated by the gales of rational laughter, audible and otherwise, which help keep the American scene —at least for Herblock's regular customers—in realistic focus.

The pompous, the fat-headed, the arrogant, the bigoted and the vicious are all impaled by Herblock, impaled, held up and exposed for what they are. Most of the time he is busily engaged impaling and puncturing, but occasionally he puts down his lance, forsakes for the moment the satirical thrust, and does a little overt preaching without getting too preachy about it—like the drawing of two ragged European kids, one of them telling the other, "One Day Last Week We Had An Egg."

Some of the cartoons I keep remembering include the picture of George Marshall behind a global map of the world talking in March, 1951 to Douglas MacArthur who is equipped with a flat, exclusively Far Eastern version of the world. Marshall half-apologetically is explaining, "We've Been Using More Of A Roundish One."

For those who can remember way back to April, 1951 when our Congress conducted its scandalous debate about whether we ought to ship some of our wheat to the starving people of India, Herblock's "Sermon On The Mount" cartoon sums up their indignation. The "mount" is a mountain of U. S. grain and standing at the top is the 82nd Congress-man informing a pleading emaciated India mother and child "You Don't Get Anything For Nothing In This World, Pal."

Herblock's shafts at Senator Taft, the D.A.R., Joe McCarthy, Pat McCarran, John L. Lewis, the 80th Congress and assorted stupidities and prejudices are merciless, but just. Another drawing which persists in popping up in my mind is the March, 1947 picture showing a Congressman creeping over the U. S. inspecting every square inch of it with a magnifying glass while behind and over him a hulking, destitute figure of a man labeled "Worldwide Want" stands and asks, "You Looking For A Communist Organizer, Mister?"

Herbert Block's prose, written in a breezy, colloquial manner serves a number of purposes. First, but not foremost, he discusses some of the trials and tribulations of the daily newspaper cartoonist. Second, he comments anecdotally on a number of specific cartoons, the remembered circumstances under which they came into being and how they were received. Third, and foremost, he develops some of his political and social thought which has constituted a sort of motivating basis for the major themes he has depicted graphically through the years. This last, since it is marked by the notes of intelligent and humanitarian liberalism, should dispel the notion —if the notion still lingers—that a Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist like Herblock is merely a more clever gag-writer than his colleagues.

Herblock is a likable, literate man who, despite the inherent limi-

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tations of the cartoon as communication, and despite the occupational dangers of caricaturization and oversimplification, controls his craft and is telling a lot of truth which needs to be told these days. I suspect there is a simple explanation for Herblock's preeminence. It is that he sees the true and loves the good. I wish there were more like him around the country where the true and the good seem to be hard put for friends these days.

REVIEWERS

John McKeon recently returned to New York after several years as an editor of the *Santa Fe Register*.

Michael Harrington is associated with the Catholic Worker movement.

Donald McDonald is a member of the editorial staff of the Davenport, Iowa, *Catholic Messenger*.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) of THE COMMONWEAL, published weekly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1952.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, THE COMMONWEAL Publishing Company, Inc., 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. Editor, Edward S. Skillin, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. Managing editor, James O'Gara, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. Business manager, Edward S. Skillin, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

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5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: 16,887. (This information is required from daily, weekly, semi-weekly, and tri-weekly newspapers only.)

EDWARD S. SKILLIN,
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